



23 October 2018

Brett Whitworth
A/ Deputy Secretary,
Planning and Design
Department of Planning and
Environment

Draft St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Plan | GANSW Urban Design Advice

Dear Brett,

In late September, GANSW was asked to provide urban design advice to the Department of Planning and Environment on the draft St Leonard's and Crows Nest 2036 plan. The scope of the urban design advice was limited to an investigation of Built Form attributes within defined areas of the draft Plan study area.

Following from the study undertaken, GANSW advised that there may be an opportunity to improve design quality outcomes through a re-balance of Built Form attributes, such as height, mass and distribution, across the precinct in appropriate locations through a Significant Sites approach. Such an approach should be supported by a Design Excellence Strategy that aligns with the Vision and Guiding Design Principles of the draft Plan. This approach would ensure that Significant Sites delivered the highest quality urban design and architectural outcomes for the precinct, balancing measured growth while retaining and enhancing the qualities of those locations that give St Leonards and Crows Nest their distinct character.

We understand that the urban design advice was given consideration in the revision of the draft Plan, including the identification of several Significant Sites and the development of Significant Site Design Criteria.

For your reference, please see attached a summary of the process undertaken by GANSW and the advice provided.

We look forward to future opportunities to contribute to development of the Final St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Plan.

Sincerely,

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In late August 2018 the Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) requested the Government Architect NSW (GANSW) to provide urban design advice on the draft St Leonards Crows Nest 2036 plan (the draft Plan) prior to the draft Plan going on exhibition in October 2018.

The draft Plan was prepared by the Department following the release of *Planning System Circular PS 18-001 respecting and enhancing local character in the planning system* (16 January 2018). The draft Plan has been guided by a *draft Local Character Statement* for the area consistent with the new approach to planning for local character. The outcomes from the *draft Local Character Statement* informed the Vision for the draft Plan. This Vision reinforced the strong preference from community to retain and enhance the character of nominated localities within the study area. The Vision was supported by Guiding Design Principles including: Place, Landscape, Built Form, Land Use, and Movement.

The urban design advice requested from GANSW was focused on the investigation of Built Form attributes within defined areas of the draft Plan study area.

GANSW reviewed the relevant draft documents provided by the Department and determined a three-part methodology. The first step was to identify key urban design considerations for the public domain that were consistent with the outcomes of the Draft Local Character Statement and that included specific qualities of the place which contribute to Character. A summary of key urban design considerations included:

- Streetscape - aspects such as setbacks, street wall height, heritage buildings;
- Key Views and Vistas - key long-distance vistas which offer sky views; vistas where a building may terminate the view; and, the distribution of higher buildings to retain sky views.

Then the control measures that determine building envelopes, and the subsequent outcomes, were compared under four scenarios. These scenarios included:

1. The existing building envelopes;
2. The application of the measures proposed under the draft Plan;
3. The application of Planning Principles from the draft Plan, excluding height transitions; and,
4. The application of the key solar controls from the North Sydney DCP 2013.

Finally, important street views in the area were identified and tested to understand the impacts and appropriateness of building envelopes. This involved the analysis of eye level perspective views of the building envelopes from scenarios 2,3 and 4 above, with regard to the key urban design considerations.

In late September GANSW provided draft urban design advice to the Department following the conclusion of the three-part methodology and a synthesis of the outcomes.

In reviewing the overall context for the draft Plan, GANSW consider that there is a requirement for the draft Plan to balance growth in response to the introduction of a new Metro station, with the retention and enhancement of the qualities of those locations which give St Leonards and Crows Nest their distinct character. The new Metro station planned for Crows Nest will bring more people to live and work in the area. This in turn, should provide opportunities to enhance local services and

amenity. The built form and public realm response to the new station in the immediate surrounding area should ensure that this opportunity is optimised and that the creation of sustainable, liveable communities is enabled and supported.

With regards to Built Form, GANSW considered that there may be an opportunity to improve urban design quality through a re-balance of Built Form attributes, such as height, mass and distribution, across the precinct in appropriate locations through a Significant Sites approach. GANSW also noted that it is essential that such an approach be supported by a Design Excellence Strategy. This will ensure that future development of Significant Sites delivers the highest design quality for the precinct through a process including a Design Excellence Competition. This approach should also be closely considered in relation to the key urban design considerations identified and to the cumulative development impacts to amenity such as open space, social services, overshadowing and apartment amenity.

The urban design advice provided by GANSW focused on Built Form attributes. Whilst these elements are important contributors to the future character of a neighbourhood, the quality of a place is substantially determined by a range of other considerations outside the scope of the urban design advice requested. These considerations are somewhat captured in Area Wide Design Principles contained in the draft Plan: Place; landscape; Land Use; and, Movement.

Further consideration should also be given as to how the objectives of *Better Placed: the integrated design policy for the built environment*, the principles within the draft Local Character statement and the key urban design considerations identified, can refine the proposal to ensure that planning envelopes translate into well-designed built form outcomes.